

African Americans

Washington State's labor force is changing, reflecting demographic shifts as well as changes in labor force participation.¹ Forecasts show that the state workforce will become increasingly more diverse because of the growing numbers of African, Asian, and other nonwhite Americans entering the labor force—considerably higher than the number of whites.²

Report Highlights³

- African Americans are more likely than whites to be in the labor force—that is, working or looking for work. However, African Americans are less likely than whites to be working.
- The more education African Americans and whites have, the more likely they are to be in the labor force and working.
- Younger African Americans are more likely than their elders to be in the labor force, but less likely to be working; this pattern is the same for whites.
- African Americans are more likely than whites to work full time.
- In general, African Americans earn less than whites.
- Program participation rates for African Americans in workforce development programs are equal

to or higher than their percentage of the state population.

- African Americans who participate in adult basic skills programs are more likely than white participants to be working after leaving the program. On the other hand, they are less likely to be working if they participate in community/technical college (CTC) job preparatory, apprenticeship, Workforce Investment Act (WIA) adult and dislocated worker, secondary career and technical education (CTE), and WIA youth programs.
- African Americans who participate in CTC job preparatory and worker retraining, private career school, and apprenticeship programs have lower median hourly wages than white participants.

African Americans in Washington⁴

Working-age African Americans, 20-64 years old, represent 62 percent of our state's African American population, which is the same percentage for working-age whites.

Slightly more than 68 percent of working-age African Americans have some postsecondary education: 23 percent have a bachelor's degree or higher; 13 percent have an associate's degree



or a vocational certificate; 32 percent have some college, but no degree; and 32 percent have a high school diploma or less. This compares with 37 percent of whites who have a bachelor's degree or higher; 15 percent who have an associate's degree or a vocational certificate; 19 percent with some college, but no degree; and 30 percent of whites who have a high school diploma or less.

About 19 percent of working-age African Americans are in school, either full time (8 percent) or part time (11 percent). Just over 10 percent of whites are in school: 7 percent full time and 3 percent part time.

A higher percentage of African Americans than whites are in the labor force : 84 percent of African Americans to 81 percent of whites. However, of those in the labor force, a smaller percentage of African Americans (92 percent) than whites (94 percent) are working.

African Americans and whites with higher levels of education are more likely to be working than those with less education.⁵ See Figure 1.

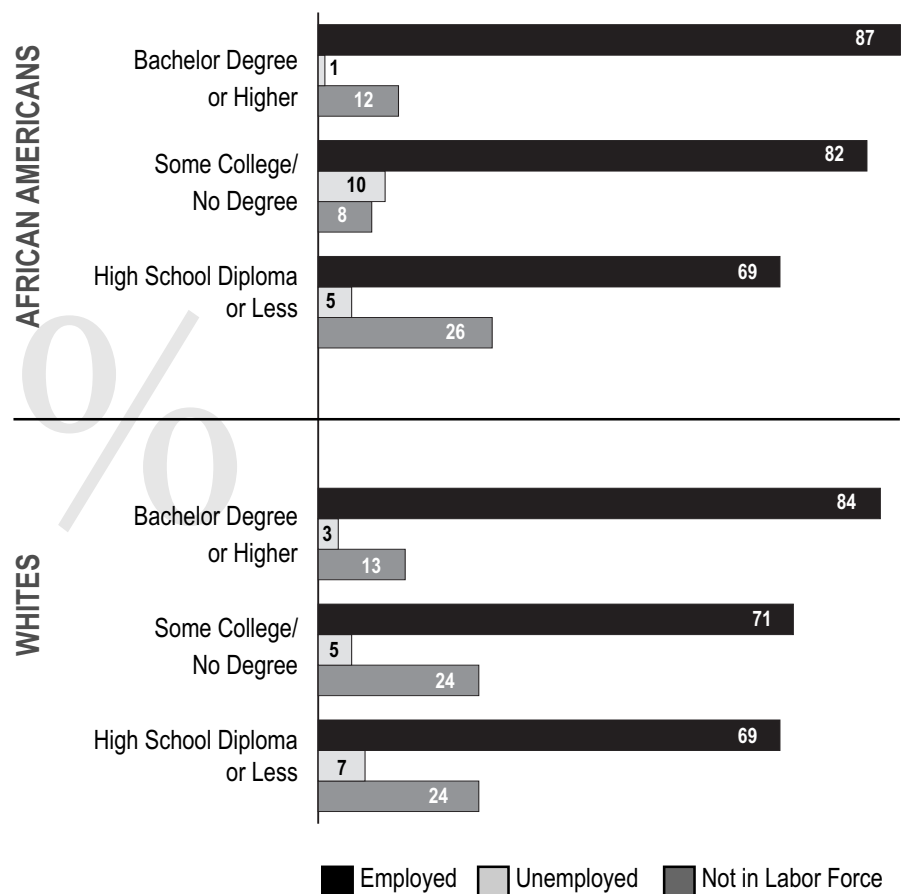
African Americans in urban areas are more likely to be in the labor force than whites in urban areas: 85 percent and 82 percent, respectively.⁶ Of those in the labor force, 92 percent of African Americans and 94 percent of whites are working.

Younger African Americans are more likely to be in the labor force than their elders: 87 percent of those 20-34, 87 percent of those 35-49, 73 percent of those 50-64. The percentage of younger

whites in the labor force is somewhat similar: 86 percent of those 20-34, 85 percent of those 35-49, and 72 percent of those 50-64. However, older African Americans and whites are more likely to be working.

If all working hours are combined, 86 percent of African Americans and 84 percent of whites work full time (35 hours or more per week).

FIGURE 1
**Labor Force Status by Level of Education: Ages 20-64,
Not Enrolled in School**



Over 10 percent of African Americans and 9 percent of whites hold more than one job.

Most African Americans work in the private sector. Fifty-six percent of African Americans

work for a private company, thirty-five percent work in the government sector, seven percent work for a nonprofit organization, and three percent are self-employed. Most whites also work in the private sector: 59 percent work for a private company, 21 percent work in the government sector, 8 percent work for a nonprofit organization, 11 percent are self-employed, and 2 percent work for the family business.

FIGURE 2

Employment in Non-Government Sector: Ages 20-64, Not Enrolled in School

By Industry

	AFRICAN AMERICANS	WHITES
Services	57	46
Manufacturing	18	11
Transportation, Communication, Utilities	10	13
Wholesale & Retail Trade	8	10
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	5	8
Construction & Mining	2	10
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting	0	2

By Occupation

	AFRICAN AMERICANS	WHITES
Business & Professional	27	35
Sales & Admin. Support	26	23
Construction, Maintenance, Production, Transportation	24	22
Service	18	12
Military-Specific	3	0
Management	2	7
Farming, Fishing, Forestry	0	1

The services industries are the largest employers of both African Americans and whites: 57 percent of African Americans and 46 percent of whites. See Figure 2.

African Americans are most likely to be in business and professional and sales and administrative support occupations, similar to whites who are in business and professional occupations. See Figure 2.

In general, African Americans earn slightly less than whites. The median hourly wage for African Americans in their primary job is \$17.00. For whites, it is \$19.23. Therefore, on an hourly basis, African Americans earn about 88 percent of what whites earn.⁷

African Americans in Washington's Workforce Development Programs⁸

The percentage of African Americans in workforce development programs is the same or greater than their percentage of the state's general population, with the exception of secondary CTE where participation is lower. African Americans are most highly represented in WIA youth programs.⁹ See Figure 3.

Where available, data show that African Americans are less likely than whites to complete workforce development programs. See Figure 4.

FIGURE 3
African Americans in Workforce Programs

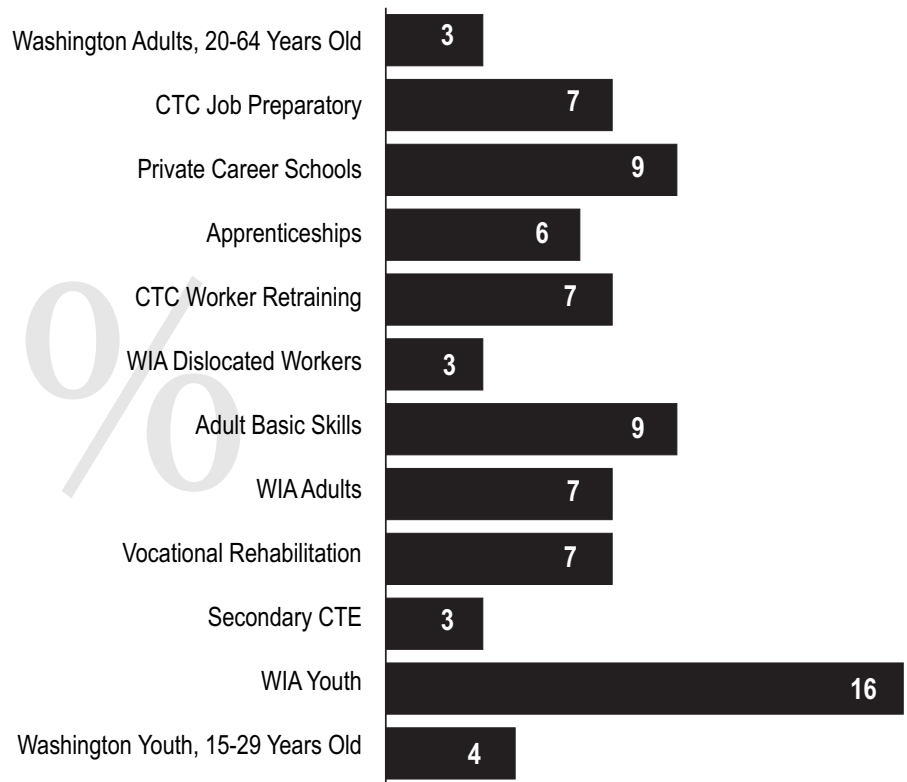


FIGURE 4
African Americans and Whites Completing Workforce Development Programs

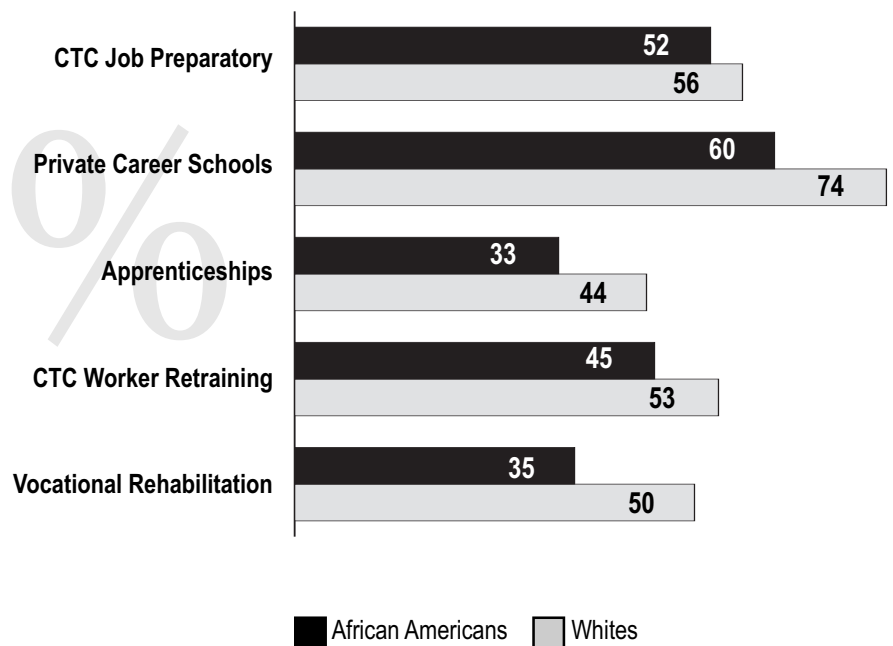


FIGURE 5

Employment Rates of African Americans and Whites After Workforce Development Programs

(employed during the third quarter after leaving the program)

	AFRICAN AMERICANS	WHITES
CTC Job Preparatory	65	72
Private Career Schools	65	65
Apprenticeships	60	73
CTC Worker Retraining	66	68
WIA Dislocated Workers	71	76
Adult Basic Skills	59	53
WIA Adults	48	68
Vocational Rehabilitation	39	45
Secondary CTE	45	60
WIA Youth	40	54

African Americans are more likely than whites to be working after leaving adult basic skills programs. They are, however, less likely to be working after leaving all other programs with the exception of private career schools where they are as likely to be working. See Figure 5.

African Americans who participate in CTC job preparatory and worker retraining, private career school, and apprenticeship programs have median hourly wages that are substantially lower than those of white participants. See Figure 6.

African Americans who participate in adult basic skills programs have median annual earnings that are higher than those of white participants. In all other programs, African Americans have similar or lower median annual earnings than whites. See Figure 6.

FIGURE 6
Earnings of African Americans and Whites After Workforce Development Programs¹⁰
(median based on the third quarter after leaving the program)

Hourly

	AFRICAN AMERICANS	WHITES
CTC Job Preparatory	11.55	12.66
Private Career Schools	11.05	11.83
Apprenticeships	17.25	21.19
CTC Worker Retraining	11.53	12.99
WIA Dislocated Workers	13.71	13.99
Adult Basic Skills	9.22	8.73
WIA Adults	10.84	10.45
Vocational Rehabilitation	9.75	9.92
Secondary CTE	8.16	8.28
WIA Youth	8.19	7.98

Annually

	AFRICAN AMERICANS	WHITES
CTC Job Preparatory	19,071	21,700
Private Career Schools	17,907	19,560
Apprenticeships	22,002	32,154
CTC Worker Retraining	19,791	22,153
WIA Dislocated Workers	27,231	26,878
Adult Basic Skills	15,561	12,591
WIA Adults	15,629	17,140
Vocational Rehabilitation	7,811	12,391
Secondary CTE	8,654	10,264
WIA Youth	6,719	7,662

End Notes

¹In this paper, the term “labor force” refers to those who are currently working (either full time or part time) or who are actively looking for work. It is further defined as civilian noninstitutional and therefore excludes those who live in nursing homes, prison, or military barracks.

²“2004 Long-Term Economic and Labor Force Forecast for Washington,” Washington State Office of Financial Management and Washington State Employment Security Department, June 2004.

³In this paper, the racial group African Americans includes all those who indicated they were of non-Hispanic ethnicity and of African American racial background only. The comparisons in this report are made to individuals of white, non-Hispanic background.

⁴The information on African Americans and white, non-Hispanics in Washington is based on data from the 2004 State Population Survey (SPS). Unless otherwise indicated, all of the employment and education information references a point in time-spring 2004. Further, the employment and earnings data are based on those who are ages 20-64 and who indicated they were not in school at the time of the survey.

⁵The sample size for African Americans with an associate’s degree or vocational certificate is too small on which to make reliable estimates.

⁶Urban and rural areas are defined using the SPS regions. The urban areas includes the following regions: King County, Other Puget Metro, Clark County, and Spokane County. The rural areas include the following regions: North Sound, West Balance, Yakima-Tri Cities, and East Balance. The sample size of African Americans in rural areas is too small on which to make reliable estimates.

⁷The sample sizes for African Americans by occupation, industry, education level, and age categories are too small on which to base reliable wage estimates.

⁸Based on participants exiting programs between July 1, 2001 and June 30, 2002. For data sources, methodology, and program descriptions see *Workforce Training Results 2004* from the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board. We caution against making comparisons among the programs or with the state’s population-at-large: the populations served, the types of services provided, and lengths of training vary substantially from program to program.

⁹Information on the state’s population ages 15-19 and 20-64 are from Washington’s Office of Financial Management’s 2004 population estimates.

¹⁰Hourly wage data are not available for all individuals. Therefore, the median hourly wage is based on a subset of the individuals on whom the median annualized earning is based.

Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board

Our Vision

Washington's Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board is an active and effective partnership of labor, business, and government leaders guiding the best workforce development system in the world.

Our Mission

We shape strategies to create and sustain a high-skill, high-wage economy.

To fulfill this Mission, the Board will:

- Advise the Governor, Legislature, and other policymakers on workforce development policy and innovative practice.
- Promote a seamless workforce development system that anticipates and meets the lifelong learning and employment needs of our current and future workforce.
- Advocate for the training and education needed for success in the 75–80 percent of jobs that do not require a baccalaureate degree.
- Ensure quality and accountability by evaluating results, and supporting high standards and continuous improvement.

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